United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend UNPROFOR mandate for six months; says Force may have to be withdrawn from Bosnia and Herzegovina if arms embargo against Bosnian Government is lifted.

• Secretary-General proposes one-month extension of UNOSOM II mandate; says coming weeks will be crucial for reconciliation process and United Nations involvement in Somalia.

• Under-Secretary-General Annan reports spirit of change in Somalia; warns factions that Security Council will not tolerate further delays in political process.

• Secretary-General recommends that UNAVEM II mandate be extended to 30 November, citing hope for comprehensive peace settlement in Angola.

• General Assembly elects 21 Vice-Presidents and appoints 9 members of Credentials Committee; Main Committees elect chairmen.

• United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti seeks support for existing relief networks in country; up to $555 million in aid will be needed in coming year.

• Secretary-General pays tribute to UNOMUR personnel and Ugandan Government as Mission is terminated.

• International Convention on Nuclear Safety opens for signature at IAEA General Conference in Vienna.

• UNCTAD Trade and Development Board begins autumn session in Geneva; to consider 1994 Trade and Development Report.

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The mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) should be extended for six months, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the Security Council dated 17 September, he

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said that in the absence of an overall political settlement, the Force's activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were invaluable. UNPROFOR played an effective role as an impartial force and represented the principles and aims of the United Nations Charter. It supported humanitarian operations, facilitated local cease-fires and promoted reconciliation between the communities.

However, the Secretary-General said that he had directed that plans be finalized for UNPROFOR's withdrawal from Bosnia and Herzegovina at short notice. He warned that the use of "disincentives" -- such as the stricter enforcement of exclusion zones around safe areas -- or the lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government would create unacceptable risks for the Force. The former action would place it unambiguously on one side of an ongoing conflict, while the latter would fan the flames that the United Nations sought to extinguish. At least 60 days would be needed to arrange a withdrawal, and extra ground forces might be needed temporarily for protection.

In Croatia, the Secretary-General continued, UNPROFOR had been prevented from fully implementing its mandate. However, it had secured respect for the cease-fire agreement, which had held for six months. It was also trying to create a basis for the reopening of negotiations between the parties and for the voluntary return of displaced persons. While there was a risk that the Force's continued presence would contribute to the maintenance of an unsatisfactory status quo, a precipitate withdrawal from Croatia could jeopardize hopes for progress there and in the former Yugoslavia as a whole.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has proposed that the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) be extended for one month. In a report to the Security Council dated 17 September, he said the end of this month would be a crucial time for the national reconciliation process and for United Nations involvement in Somalia. With the cooperation of the parties and the help of UNOSOM II, a Hawiye peace conference and the preparatory meeting for the National Reconciliation Conference could be convened.

The Secretary-General noted that the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Kofi Annan, had recently reviewed the situation on the ground in Somalia. In view of that undertaking and current developments, he said he would assess the prospects for national reconciliation and make recommendations regarding UNOSOM II's future in the second part of his report in mid-October.

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Having visited Somalia from 15 to 19 September, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations Kofi Annan today said that a new spirit of change and seriousness had emerged there. Nevertheless, he warned all Somalis, and

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particularly the faction leaders, that neither the Security Council nor the international community would tolerate any further delays in the political process.

The Somali people were tired of conflict, especially inter-clan fighting, Mr. Annan told correspondents in Nairobi. He was encouraged that the various factions had already begun consultations with a view to convening a meeting to prepare for a National Reconciliation Conference next month. However, without significant progress towards reconciliation and the formation of a broad-based government, the Council would have no alternative but to terminate the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II).

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) be extended to 30 November, in the hope of a successful conclusion to the ongoing peace process. In a report to the Security Council dated 17 September, he said the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) could resolve all outstanding issues in the Lusaka peace talks by the end of September. Extra efforts and true statesmanship would be needed to capitalize on UNITA's recent acceptance of proposals on national reconciliation.

The Secretary-General said the Security Council should remain ready to increase UNAVEM II's strength to its previous levels in the event of a comprehensive settlement. He also expressed concern regarding the persistent fighting in Angola, and attacks against international relief personnel. He urged the parties, in particular UNITA, to cooperate fully with the United Nations in that regard.

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Beginning its forty-ninth session yesterday, the General Assembly elected a new President, Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire), and 21 Vice-Presidents, and appointed nine members of the Credentials Committee. The Assembly's six Main Committees also elected their chairmen.

The Vice-Presidents of the Assembly are: Armenia, Austria, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominican Republic, Fiji, France, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sudan, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay. The members of the Credentials Committee are: China, Fiji, Honduras, Namibia, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Suriname, Togo and the United States.

The Chairmen of the Main Committees are: Luis Valencia-Rodriguez (Ecuador), First Committee (Disarmament and International Security); Sher Afgan Khan (Pakistan), Second Committee (Economic and Financial); Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural); Borys Hudyma (Ukraine), Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization);

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Adrien Teirlinck (Belgium), Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary); and George O. Lamptey (Ghana), Sixth Committee (Legal).

The Assembly also took note of a letter from the Secretary-General to the President regarding Member States in arrears in the payment of financial contributions to the United Nations. It stated that, under Article 19 of the Charter, a Member whose arrears equals or exceeds the amount due from it for the preceding two full years shall have no vote in the Assembly.

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The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti, Ross Mountain, has underlined the need for support for existing humanitarian networks in the country. He said non-governmental organizations -- particularly Haitian ones -- were essential to the humanitarian relief programme there. He stressed the importance of coordinating humanitarian activities in Haiti, and noted that organizations working there had already established committees to cover the provision of health services, food and water.

Mr. Mountain said the next three months would be crucial to Haiti's recovery. Humanitarian agencies have estimated that the country will need from $450 million to $555 million in aid over the next year. They have also urged that sanctions against Haiti be lifted immediately.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has paid tribute to the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR), which has just been formally closed down. In a report to the Security Council dated 19 September, he also thanked the Ugandan Government for its cooperation with the Mission.

The Secretary-General said that while UNOMUR had been unable to create an atmosphere conducive to a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Rwanda, it had played a useful role as a confidence-building mechanism following the conclusion of the Arusha peace agreement in August 1993. It had also supported the deployment of the expanded United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and the coordination of humanitarian relief activities there.

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The International Convention on Nuclear Safety was opened for signature yesterday at the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. Thirty-eight States signed the Convention, which is the first legal instrument to directly address the safety of nuclear power plants worldwide.

The Convention applies to land-based civil nuclear power plants and obliges Contracting Parties to establish and maintain proper legislative and

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regulatory frameworks to govern safety. Signatories commit themselves to applying fundamental safety principles for nuclear installations, and agree to participate in periodic peer review meetings.

The Convention will remain open for signature throughout the IAEA General Conference this week and at IAEA headquarters until its entry into force. It will enter into force ninety days after the twenty-second instrument of ratification is deposited with the IAEA, including the instruments of 17 States with critical nuclear reactors.

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The 138-member Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has begun its autumn session in Geneva. The Board has before it the 1994 Trade and Development Report. Between now and 30 September, it will discuss elements of successful growth and adjustment strategies, and consider the outcome of the Uruguay Round of trade talks.

The Board will also discuss trade and the environment, and the quest for sustainable development. It will examine the impact of environmental policies on export competitiveness and market access.

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